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Even as state lawmakers sent Gov. Rod Blagojevich a transit bailout plan Thursday, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk warned that failure to produce a broader capital construction program could cost Illinois hundreds of millions in federal dollars.

Kirk, speaking to an Arlington Heights service club at the Wellington restaurant in Arlington Heights, emphasized the message he and U.S. Rep. Melissa Bean began spreading a month ago: that if state officials do not raise matching money, they could lose large sums intended for Illinois under the 2005 federal transportation bill.

Kirk credited the bipartisan cooperation of former House Speaker Dennis Hastert and Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley for tentatively delivering to Illinois a greater share of money than any other state would receive.

"But don't forget," he said, "that it takes one-third in matching state money to unlock the two-thirds federal money."

Thursday's agreement in Springfield will provide an infusion of some \$500 million per year in operating funds for the CTA, Metra and Pace. The legislation does not provide money for a broader statewide capital construction program. Many Republican legislators had sought such a program as a condition of their support for Chicago-area transit aid.

Kirk, a Highland Park Republican, and Bean, a Barrington Democrat, have noted that the absence of a statewide capital program already has slowed progress on plans to build the STAR Line, offering suburb-to-suburb commuter rail service, and to expand the Union Pacific Northwest line.

Kirk told Rotary Club of Arlington Heights members Thursday that several other states are watching closely, licking their chops at the prospect of Springfield failing to generate matching

state funds.

He cited, for example, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation as one of the "best organized lobbies in Washington" and said federal transportation officials are more likely to give Illinois' share of money to other states than return it to the treasury if Springfield does not produce a capital program.

While there is no specific deadline for Illinois to OK matching funds, Kirk said that within six months federal officials will begin to make "permanent decisions" about distributing the money.

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